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Eng. Poetry vol 44.

CHARITY:

A

POETICAL ESSAY.

By CHARLES PETER LAYARD, A.M.
FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

Homo ſum: humani nihil a me alienum puto.

CAMBRIDGE,
Printed by J. ARCHDEACON Printer to the UNIVERSITY;
And ſold by J. WOODYER, and R. MATTHEWS, in Cambridge; J. BEECROFT, Paternoſter-Row, J. RIVINGTON, in St. Paul's Churchyard, T. CADELL, in the Strand, J. ROBSON, New-Bond Street, S. LEACROFT, Charing Croſs, London; and D. PRINCE, Oxford.
M.DCC.LXXIII.

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M DCC LXXIII.

A Clauſe of Mr. SEATON's Will, Dated *Oct.* 8. 1738.

I Give my Kiſlingbury Eſtate to the Univerſity of Cambridge for ever: the Rents of which ſhall be diſpoſed of yearly by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, as he the Vice-Chancellor, the Maſter of Clare Hall, and the Greek Profeſſor for the time being, or any two of them ſhall agree. Which three perſons aforeſaid ſhall give out a Subject, which Subject ſhall for the firſt Year be one or other of the Perfections or Attributes of the Supreme Being, and ſo the ſucceeding Years, till the Subject is exhauſted; and afterwards the Subject ſhall be either Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell, Purity of Heart, &c. or whatever elſe may be judged by the Vice-Chancellor, Maſter of Clare Hall, and Greek Profeſſor, to be moſt conducive to the honour of the Supreme Being and recommendation of Virtue. And they ſhall yearly diſpoſe of the Rent of the above Eſtate to that Maſter of Arts, whoſe Poem on the Subject given ſhall be beſt approved by them. Which Poem I ordain to be always in Engliſh, and to be printed; the expence of which ſhall be deducted out of the product of the Eſtate, and the reſidue given as a reward for the Compoſer of the Poem, or Ode, or Copy of Verſes.

WE the underwritten do aſſign Mr. SEATON's Reward to CHARLES PETER LAYARD, M.A. for his Poem on CHARITY, and do direct the ſaid Poem to be printed according to the Tenor of the Will.

W. Cooke, Vice-Chanc^{r}.

Oct. 19. 1773. *P. S. Goddard*, Maſter of Clare-Hall.

J. Lambert, Greek Profeſſor.

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A Clause of Mr. SEATON's Will.

Dated Oct. 8. 1738.

CHARITY.

OF ſlaughter'd Hoſts, of Triumphs bought with Blood,
The thund'ring Chariot, or the foaming Steed
No more; ſuch Themes demand the venal Strain
Of pompous Adulation, ſuch demand
The callous Heart, which meanly can deſcend
Below the gen'rous Pride of conſcious Virtue,
To ſooth the mighty Murd'rers of Mankind.
Shall Men like theſe, whom angry Heav'n deſign'd
The Miniſters of Wrath, ſhall ſuch receive
The Tribute of the Lay? and ſhall the Muſe
With impious Hand th' enſanguin'd Laurel twine
About their frowning Brows? forbid it Heav'n!
Forbid it Juſtice! rather, let the Voice

Of babling Fame be mute, nor idly vaunt
The Cruelties of War, the Hero's Rage,
While Rapine, Violence and Death conſpire
To raiſe his Name, and conſecrate his Crimes;
While, proudly looking from his airy Height,
He ſpurns his proſtrate Foes, defies the Force
Of Chance or Fate, and thinks himſelf a God.
Vain Boaſt of ſenſeleſs Pride! 'tis not the Sword
Avenging, or the Tyranny of Pow'r
Inſulting o'er Diſtreſs, which from the Earth
Can lift aſpiring Man, his lowly State
To various Change expos'd, far other Views,
Far other Thoughts preſcribes; 'tis his to ſmooth
The Bed of Sickneſs, his to feel for all
Who groan beneath Misfortune, and to all,
Far as allow his ſcanty Pow'rs, extend
Unwearied Charity, unfeigned Love.

O CHARITY! of ſocial Virtues chief!
Offspring of Love celeſtial! at thy Name
All Nature ſmiles, and ev'ry grateful Voice
Joins in one gen'ral Song in Praiſe of Thee!

Nor

Nor ſhall my ſimple Muſe refrain her Lay,
Albeit, unus'd to Theme ſublime, ſhe ſing
A wild and artleſs Carol, ſuch as flows
Rude and unpoliſh'd from the ruſtic Pipe
Of Shepherd, when at Eve returning late
He ſwells the Note of Gratitude to Heav'n.
Nor, to inſpire her Song, will ſhe invoke
The aid of fabled Deity, of old
On ſacred Mount, or near prophetic Stream,
Or in the deep Receſs of duſky Grove
Feign'd to reſide; thy potent Name alone
Breathes Inſpiration, with reſiſtleſs Pow'r
Calls Fancy forth, while, through the Heart diffus'd,
Each bright Affection, riſing into Thought,
Attunes the Lyre and animates the Song.

When Man from Bliſs through Diſobedience fell,
Within his Mind degenerate, was born
The Fiend Suſpicion, Child of conſcious Guilt
And trembling Fear; ſhe taught him to perceive,
As if reflected back, in other Minds
The num'rous Ills he nouriſh'd in his own,

And with the jaundic'd Eye of Jealouſy
To ſcan another's Deeds; contracting cloſe
Each Inlet to the Heart, checking the Springs
Of brotherly Affection, ſocial Love,
The Ornament and Happineſs of Man!
Beneath the Maſk of Prudence ſhe diffus'd
Her deadly Venom, and in ſtudied Phraſe
Of feign'd Attachment dealt her Precepts forth,
'Till the deluded Wretch, to ev'ry Senſe
Of gen'rous Feelings callous, dragg'd a Life
Of ſad Uncertainty and endleſs Pain:
Hence ev'ry Virtue its due Honor loſt,
Or ſeem'd to ſhine as ſhines ſome baleful Star
Preſaging ſwift Deſtruction: Such Miſchance
Mark'd the ſad Fall to Wretchedneſs and Sin!

As Poiſon from the Dagger's tainted Point
Steals through the Veins, and with the wholeſome Blood
And gen'rous Juices mixing, through each Paſs,
Each Labyrinth of Circulation flows
Purſuing Life, relentleſs, 'till it reach
The Citadel of Health, where deep enſhrin'd

Ethereal

Ethereal Eſſence! dwells the ſov'reign Soul,
And thence with Violence reſiſtleſs drives
The bright Inhabitant; ſo through the Mind
Her potent Bane the Fiend Suſpicion ſpreads.
What now avails the Senſe of conſcious Worth?
The Bluſh of Chaſtity? the down-caſt Eye
Of modeſt Meekneſs ever gleaning Praiſe,
While, ſeeking to avoid the dazzling Glare
Of popular Applauſe, ſhe ſhuns the Ken
Of Admiration? What avails the Youth
That noble Fire, which, glowing from his Heart,
By Virtue nouriſh'd and from Virtue ſprung,
With gen'rous Feelings animates his Soul,
To gen'rous Actions prompts his willing Hand,
Exalting and refining ev'ry Thought?
They all are vain, Suſpicion evil-ey'd
Withers their Bloom, and to Hypocriſy
Aſcribes their Birth: Where then ſhall Virtue find
A Friend, a Guardian, whoſe impartial Hand
Shall from her clouded Beauties lift the Veil
And to th' approving Eyes of all diſplay
Their genuine Luſtre?

That Taſk, O ſmiling CHARITY! is thine:
At thy Approach Suſpicion fades away,
And all the hideous Phantoms ſhe had rais'd
Vaniſh like Ghoſts before the Morning Beam;
For thou art juſt, beneficent, and kind,
Long-ſuff'ring, ſwift to Love, and ſlow to Wrath;
To Thee that flaming Zeal is all unknown,
Which to the Yoke of Superſtition bends
Indignant Reaſon, ſuch as erſt inflam'd
The turban'd Caliph, while with Fire and Sword,
From Aſia's utmoſt Bounds o'er proſtrate Lands
He ſpread the Terrors of his impious Faith;
Arabia Mother of the pious Fraud
Falſly call'd Happy! Egypt fam'd of old
For Sapience, now in tenfold Darkneſs wrapt
Of dulleſt Ignorance; where ſeven-mouth'd Nile
Laments his Fate revers'd, his Shores where once
The Grecian Sages ſought bright Wiſdom's Haunt,
Now by the Foot of fell Barbarian trod.
Nor thou more luckleſs Land ſhalt be forgot
Where firſt the genuine Beams of Truth ſhone forth
Welcome to all Mankind, but leaſt to thee

Blind

Blind to thy own Advantage! deaf to all
The Calls of Heaven indulgent.
Hence through thy Borders Ruin proudly ſtalks
And Deſolation: Where is now the Pride
Of ancient Cities? where the tow'ring State
Of Temples fam'd of old? all fall'n and loſt,
In one Confuſion wrapt, ſad Monuments
Of the juſt Vengeance of offended Heav'n.

But other Mis'ries call us nearer home,
Where e'en the Law of CHRIST, the Law of Love
Is made the Source of Violence and Woe.
Deep in yon Dungeon's melancholy Gloom
Behold the proſtrate Wretch; one feeble Hand
Supports his Head, the other to his Breaſt
Preſt hard declares the Pangs which burſt his Heart:
No cheering Sun for ſeven long tedious Years,
No Wife's Embrace, no Children's artleſs Smile,
No Ray of Hope, no friendly Intercourſe
Have varied his ſad Hours! but hark the Grate
On Hinge diſcordant turns! is it Relief?
Ah! no, the Miniſters of Torment come!

They come to wring the Life-Blood from his Heart,
Drop following Drop in ſlow-conſuming Pain.
What hath he done? hath he betray'd the State?
Hath he imbru'd his Hands in Parents' Blood?
Hath he blaſphem'd the Majeſty of Heav'n?
None, none of theſe! a Citizen eſteem'd,
A pious Son, Religion's firmeſt Friend
He long had liv'd, and ſtill had liv'd in Peace,
Had not his Fate to Luſitania's Shore
Borne him reluctant, where with Iron Fang
Oppreſſion, under bright Religion's Maſk,
To falſe Opinions immolates alike
The Parent, Brother, Citizen and Friend.

Bleſt Land! where Perſecution draws no more
The ſlaught'ring Sword, where Liberty reſides
Fair Guardian of thy Peace, where Juſtice holds
An equal Balance, where Religion ſmiles
In all her own Simplicity array'd:
Not in the tawdry Trappings which conceal
Beneath the glitt'ring Pageantry of Dreſs
The Tyranny of Pow'r; but rules benign,

As Heav'n's high Will demands, thy happy Sons.
Long may they know their Happineſs, long feel
How vaſt, how infinite a Debt they owe
Of Gratitude to Heav'n; as much ſurpaſs
In Worth as in Felicity Mankind:
With them, as the green Tree near fertile Streams,
May ev'ry Virtue flouriſh, ev'ry Vice
Fade as the Graſs upon the Mountain's Top,
Which withers and its Place is known no more:
But chief, O ſweetly ſmiling CHARITY!
Deign from the bleſt Abodes ſtill to look down
On this thy fav'rite Iſle, ſtill to inſpire
Thoſe upright Sentiments, that genuine Love,
Stranger to Perſecution, which adorns
Thy Vot'ries, who by thee are taught to bear
With thoſe Infirmities they cannot heal,
Whate'er is worthy Praiſe to hope of all,
All good of all Men gladly to believe,
And in the Light of Brethren to eſteem
Each Race, each Sect, and ev'ry Child of Man.

Nor yet to ſpeculative Thought confin'd,

Deep in the Mind conceiv'd, are the rich Gifts
Of CHARITY, but, like the gen'rous Fire
Which erſt the Bards of ancient Time inflam'd,
Burſt forth in Words of Import vaſt and high,
Apt to expreſs with Energy divine
The noble Feelings of the Heav'n-born Soul:
Hence flow the Streams of Wiſdom and of Truth,
Friendly Advice, and ſocial Intercourſe;
Hence Candor, Friend to injur'd Innocence,
Robs Scandal of its Prey, and lifts the Shield
Of Juſtice, proof againſt the fiery Darts
Of Envy or of Malice, Foes declar'd
To Virtue, and the Vot'ries at her Shrine.

To Errors prone, and eager to purſue
The gaudy Phantoms of a Summer's day,
Burſting the galling Fetters of Reſtraint,
The Youth through Pleaſures faſcinating Path
Ranges at Will, impatient of the Frown
Of reverend Reproof; him unforeſeen
Malice aſſaults, and from her ſecret Place
Where, from the Light of Heav'n remov'd, ſhe dwells

Bloated

Bloated with Venom, with unerring Aim
Wounds unſuſpicious; bluſh ye Sons of Men;
In human Minds ſhall there exiſt ſuch Rage,
Such Cruelty as e'en the Defart-Brutes
Diſdain to own? when through the gloomy Night
The murd'ring Wolf ranges, keen Hunger drives
The Robber from his Den, no wanton Luſt
Of Blood; but ye, ye Sons of Malice ſay,
What Paſſion prompts, what Appetite commands,
What Pleaſure tempts you, that with ruthleſs Fang
Ye ſacrifice the Innocent?
Quit then the horrid Trade, and learn to feel;
Learn that ſuperior Excellence of Man,
To imitate the Meſſengers of Heav'n,
And warn the unthinking of the gath'ring Storm;
To guide his Footſteps, from the flow'ry Path
Of Vice, to Virtue, Happineſs and Peace;
Not to depreſs the Soul already fall'n,
Much leſs unveil to the World's ſearching Eye
The Weakneſs of a Brother, but reſiſt
The Tyranny of Malice, and ſtand forth
The Champion of the injur'd and oppreſs'd.

Theſe Arts are worthy Man, theſe Arts exalt
His Nature; and as all-pervading Fire
Refines the Silver from its earthly Droſs,
From Sin and Sorrow purify his Soul,
A Candidate for Happineſs and Heav'n.

Nor, though provok'd by Injury and Ill,
Shall the ſad Curſe from the unhallow'd Lip
Fall unreprov'd, nor ſhall the Voice beſtow'd
On Man to ſing the great Creator's Praiſe,
Be us'd to ban His Creatures, or call down
The Stroke of Vengeance on the hoſtile Head.
What though the Tyrant, with terrific Frown,
Doom thee to Death, with all its horrid Train
Of Terrors, ling'ring Pangs, and dire Diſgrace!
Think how the holy Saviour of Mankind
Endur'd whate'er or Cruelty, or Rage,
Of Torment could invent; — behold him now
Suſpended on the Croſs! on his pale Brow
Hang the cold Drops of Death; through ev'ry Limb
The piercing Torture rages; ev'ry Nerve,
Stretch'd with Exceſs of Pain, trembles convuls'd.

Now look beneath, and view the ſenſeleſs Crowd,
How they deride his Suff'rings, how they ſhake
Their Heads contemptuous, while the bitter Taunt,
More bitter than the Gall they gave, inſults
The Agonies of him on whom they gaze.
But hark, he ſpeaks! and the ſtill-hov'ring Breath
Wafts his laſt Pray'r to all-approving Heav'n:
"Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Ye, who extol the Joys of ſocial Love,
Say, can the various Hiſtory of Man,
Throughout its long-drawn Roll, produce one Act
To be compar'd with this? can Friendſhip boaſt
A Parallel? that Friend for Friend ſhould die,
How rare! how wonderful! ſuperior Love
Man hath not known; beyond this lofty Height,
Not all the Diſcipline of ancient Schools,
Had taught to ſoar; to brave the Stroke of Death,
Or, numb'd in Apathy, to baniſh Pain,
Or, when the common Good preſcrib'd, to die,
Was their's to teach; but to ſurvive Diſgrace,
Or to behold the Triumph of a Foe,

They could not learn; not Cato's ſelf endur'd
The galling Thought, but, wrapt in ſullen Gloom
Of Diſappointment and Deſpair, forſook
The Cauſe he could not ſave; to conquer Hate,
And in its Place to cheriſh Love unfeign'd,
Forgiveneſs and Forgetfulneſs of Wrongs,
No Precepts but the perfect Law of CHRIST,
No Teacher but the bleſſed SON of GOD,
Could e'er inſtruct Mankind; wherefore to Him,
Eternal Saviour, univerſal King,
In Heav'n and Earth, by Angels and by Men,
Be Glory, Honour, Majeſty and Praiſe.

Thy ſalutary Influence o'er the Mind,
Whether in lofty Thought, or Word diſplay'd,
The Muſe, unequal to the arduous Taſk,
Too boldly hath attempted to deſcribe;
And yet thy noble Deeds remain unſung,
O CHARITY! nor ſhall the Theme diſmay.
The Lord of Heav'n, who from his Throne above
Governs the Univerſe, yet deigns to hear
The Praiſe which from the Mouths of Sucklings flows,

And from the liſping Babe ordaineth Strength.

When the laſt awful Trumpet ſhall proclaim
The Day of Juſtice and of Judgment come,
And from the teeming Earth and frighted Sea,
Shall call each trembling Spirit to his Fate;
Then, as the Stars which deck the Vault of Heav'n,
The Righteous ſhall ſhine forth, while dire Diſmay,
And inly-wounding Guilt, and endleſs Shame
Await the Sons of Wretchedneſs and Sin;
Theſe, from the Juſt divided, ſhall attend
Their dreadful Sentence, while their angry God
Pronounces their irrevocable Doom:
Depart ye curſed, 'midſt eternal Flames,
For Satan and his Rebel Hoſt prepar'd,
In Darkneſs, Chains and Wretchedneſs to groan:
For when I hunger'd ye deny'd me Meat,
When I was thirſty ye refus'd the Cup,
Againſt my Miſery ye ſhut your Door,
When on the Bed of Sickneſs I was caſt,
When in the Bonds of Tyranny I lay,
To the loud Cries of Sorrow ye were deaf,

From my Diſtreſs ye turn'd away your Eyes;
For that Relief ye impiouſly deny'd
Your ſuff'ring Brethren, ye refus'd to me.

What Tongue of Man or Angel can expreſs
Thoſe Pangs, which on the Sons of Sin and Woe
This Judgment muſt inflict? or what that Joy,
Which, like the Morning's Brightneſs, ſhall ſpring up
To them, who in the Paths of Righteouſneſs,
Throughout this toilſome Pilgrimage of Life,
Have, like the Sun through his fixt Path in Heav'n,
Purſu'd their ſteady Way? they only ſet
To riſe again more glorious, to begin
A Courſe which nor the Stroke of Death, nor Time
Shall end or interrupt; thoſe precious Seeds
Of Charity and Love, which here on Earth
Were ſown in Sorrow, ſhall produce their Fruit,
An endleſs Harveſt of eternal Joy.
'Mid theſe ſhall ſhine, He, at whoſe foſt'ring Hand
The Orphan and the Widow have receiv'd
Th' Aſſiſtance they implor'd, and He, to whom
The feeble Cry of Sickneſs was a Plea

Too ſtrong to be reſiſted, ev'ry Act
Which ſhun'd the trifling Plaudit of Mankind,
Shall here to wond'ring Millions be diſplay'd,
A Monument of Grace; no Alms ſo ſmall,
Not ev'n the Cup of Water, if beſtow'd
With Charity, ſhall loſe its juſt Reward.
What Weight of endleſs Glory then ſhall crown
Thoſe who from Ignorance and Error's Thrall
Have freed their Brethren; they to diſtant Times
And Ages yet unborn, and Climes remote,
Where yet the Sun of Science never roſe,
Extended their Benevolence; to them
The Tongues of Thouſands ſhall aſcribe that Praiſe
They nobly earn'd on Earth; while at the Shrine
Of Truth they offer'd Fortune's vaunted Gifts,
Gifts truly valued only in their Uſe.
With theſe, reliev'd from Labour and from Care,
Thoſe, who through pureſt Channels taught to flow
The Streams of that Benevolence, ſhall ſhine;
For without them thoſe Streams had flow'd in vain,
Nor own'd the glorious Source from whence they ſprung.

Such are the high Rewards with which thy Sons,
O CHARITY! hereafter ſhall be crown'd:
For without thee what is the boaſted Height
To which Humanity affects to ſoar?
Knowledge is but an empty, uſeleſs Sound,
Science a Jargon; ev'n the glorious Gift
Of Prophecy, its Myſt'ries to unfold,
Yea, ev'n that Pow'r which chang'd fair Nature's Plan,
And bad the Sun ſtand ſtill, if not from thee
It riſe, to thee return, is void and vain.
What though to Poverty's imploring Voice
I give my earthly Goods; though to the Pile
I yield my Body; if thy genuine Love
Inſpire not, this alike is void and vain.
Thou, mild and gentle Nature! art eſtrang'd
From Envy, Hatred, Inſolence or Pride;
Thou ſeekeſt not thy own, but others' Weal,
Slow to reprove, but ſtudious to applaud,
And from the Eyes of Malice to conceal
The Weakneſs thou lamenteſt to behold:
For thou of each believ'ſt and hop'ſt the beſt,
Forbearing and forgiving ev'ry Ill.

The Time ſhall come when Prophecy itſelf,
And all the Knowledge which exalts Mankind,
Shall loſe their Uſe; theſe, while the State of Man
In Imperfection lies, by Heav'n are made
To compaſs Ends ſublime; but when that State
Imperfect for Perfection ſhall be chang'd,
Shall fade away, and boaſt that Uſe no more;
Thus in the Dawn of Life, faint is the Ray
Of Reaſon, which in Manhood brighter ſhines
A Guide unerring; while this nether World
Detains us, all the Knowledge we can boaſt
Is but a faint Reſemblance of that pure,
That all-perceiving Wiſdom, which adorns
Thoſe Spirits ſuperior, to whoſe raviſh'd Eyes
The perfect Scheme of Providence appears
In Brightneſs inconceivable diſplay'd.
But ſubject to no Change, through endleſs Time
Shall Faith, and Hope, and Charity endure;
And thou, O CHARITY! of theſe the Chief,
In high Preëminence ſhalt ever reign.

The Time shall come when Prophecy shall fail,
And all the Knowledge which exalts Mankind,
Shall lofe their Uſe; tho', while the State of Man
In Imperfection lies, by Heav'n are made
To compaſs Epoca ſublime; but when that State
Imperfect for Perfection ſhall be chang'd,
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